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TUBERCULOSIS AND NOTIFICATION.

At a recent Boston meeting, Dr. Eugene R. Kelley, health commissioner of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, called attention to the world-wide increase in tuberculosis. This is a phenomenon of great interest and of much consequence, the more so since the reasons for it are not clearly understood.

It has the more interest since there have been established in so many places leagues or societies combatting the disease. In this connection there is an interesting phenomenon, with reference to the decline in the mortality rate from this disease and the societies. In some places the associations, perhaps with the idea of securing more funds for the good work, have taken all the credit. To an extent this is the case of the fly which sat on the ox's horn and said, "What a great dust I am making."

Students of the graphic curves of tuberculosis are well aware that, ten or fifteen years before there was any anti-tuberculosis society in the world, there had begun a marked decline in the mortality curve of the disease. The associations and the boards of health have accomplished splendid things but there was some natural condition, not much discussed, which was giving its aid to the betterment of the health of man. Natural aids are never to be despised and natural conditions of dissemination will continue to spring their surprises, as indeed the outbreak of influenza-pneumonia has done so recently.

There seems to be without question a condition extending through civilized lands, favorable today to the spread of tuberculosis. No one has described it yet it exists. One phase has been expressed in the fear that returned prisoners from German soil, coming to their home towns in France, would be heavily infected. One of the most praiseworthy movements of the age has been the notable manner in which the International Health Board and the Red Cross have joined hands with the municipalities of France, and more recently of Italy, in the campaign of health education which has had tuberculosis and infant mortality for its targets.

In this country there will shortly be demobilized hundreds of thousands of men from over seas and from the camps. It is true that before discharge they will be examined by experts in order that their precise physical condition may be recorded. No one will know, however, to what extent their resistance may be impaired, for this may not always be determinable. In their home towns, with a return perhaps to occupations aloof from fresh air, no one can say what may be the future outcome.

There are, however, two safeguards neglected by our citizens oftentimes, but within the bounds of possibility—medical inspection and notification. Medically speaking we are a nation of happy-go-lucky sea captains, who never sound the bells till the crew reports water in the hold. We seldom inspect our bodies until we feel that something serious is the matter. Watchfulness and care of ourselves, with frequent surveys by the family physician, is a doctrine of public education that this country sadly needs. On the other hand early notification is a most important factor in the warfare against disease. The proper recognition of the value of notification is growing in this country, but alas, how slowly. With only one third of the country sufficiently interested in vital statistics to furnish to the government accurate figures of the birth-rate, there is little wonder that notification lags. But physicians should rally to the good cause and see to it that their districts are furnished with reliable figures concerning the incidence of communicable disease. With this information in hand the health officer has a basis on which to work. He has the symptoms and with these will be able intelligently to apply the remedy.

FIRST AID COURSES AND AMERICA'S WELFARE.

How often we hear the question asked—"And what good is it going to do you to take a course in 'first aid nursing' now that the war is over?" Usually the scoffer is easily convinced that nothing is wasted when a girl or woman or man takes the hours from a busy life to go through a series of lessons in health preservation, but few people think of the vast good that has been accomplished in America by these classes, aside from any that may ever come should the nurses be called for in emergencies.

These classes are teaching the women and men of America how to make their homes better fitted for health conservatories. Women who left their school days behind them before physiology was a part of the equipment, women who never did study anyhow, and women who may have come to our shores without the knowledge of American ways and methods,—they all are glad to take this course in "first aid" for it has become the popular thing.

The first lessons of the course, which the Red Cross has prepared, deal with disease, its cause and prevention. Then follow the lessons on the care of the house, of the ice chest, of water, ventilation, fires, lighting and sewage. These are vitally interesting to every woman, especially to the woman whose slender income makes it necessary for her to understand how best to care for the needs of her family. There are lessons in bedmaking. Then comes the care of the sick, thus fitting the women to take the responsibility of caring for those of their own households who may be ill without calling upon the graduate nurses who are so needed overseas or in time of epidemics. It also means the conservation of the family's money, for the trained woman can thus care for her own family without the expense of the trained nurse.

Classes are conducted in a business-like fashion and on graduation, if the student